



Wayside Map Planning

Unlike published maps, wayside maps can only be used on-site and cannot be carried away with the visitor for further reference. Wayside maps work best when they are site-specific and have a clear focus. They should provide only the necessary information to assist a visitor traveling from the sign location (point A) to point B. They should not include all the information you would see in a photograph, on the ground or in other parkwide maps. The “You Are Here” is almost always the most important feature on a wayside map.

Planning Issues

The following information is needed in order to create a well-focused wayside map:

Site

The specific location of the wayside is critical in determining the content of the map.

Purpose

The intent of the map may be the same as the exhibit, or it may be somewhat different.

Audience

If there is a primary user group for the wayside, (Dayhikers? Campers? Tour Groups? Horseback Riders? Backcountry Users? Family Groups? Wheelchair users?) the map can be designed to better address the needs and concerns of the specific audience.

Size and Scale

The size and scale of the map is based on its purpose, the amount of space available in the exhibit layout, and the geographic area and content of the map. A poorly designed map can mislead people if, for example, short distances appear to be very long. Maps should be created at the same size as will be used in the final reproduction. Adding to the map area, or changing the scale of a map can double the cost and time needed to create a map.

Content

The cartographer will need to know what geographic features and labels to include on the map. Only those elements which are relevant to the purpose of the map should be shown. It is helpful to have written list of all features (park areas, open water areas, drainages, roads, trails etc.) and labels (spelled correctly) listed in the order of importance. A map compilation can be a very helpful tool for conveying the map content to a cartographer. Also, the labels used on a map should reflect signage used in the park and wording used in the exhibit text. Refer to the official publication for consistency among media.

Orientation

Published maps are generally oriented with north at the top, however wayside maps often work better when oriented in the same direction as the wayside. The following criteria can be used to help determine map orientation.

- ☐ map will show a large area (entire park or an area that includes features that cannot be seen from the location of the wayside)
- ☐ map will be used in more than one location with different You Are Here's
- ☐ map will be used on a kiosk
- ☐ map will be used on upright exhibits which can be oriented north, east or west
- ☐ visitors are likely to have a published map in hand and may use it for cross-reference
- ☐ map will show a small area with features that can be readily seen from the location of the wayside
- ☐ map will be used on a low-profile exhibit
- ☐ map will be used on an upright exhibit that is oriented south

If you checked one or more of the first five conditions, the map may need to be oriented north. If you checked one or more of the last three, the map may need to be oriented in the direction of the wayside.

Reference Materials

Gather resource maps to be used for base information, keeping in mind that these reference maps were created for different purposes. A map compilation, a hand or computer drawn map showing all content necessary to create the final map, is an excellent reference source.